

Message Text

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PAGE 01 MEXICO 02772 012159Z

67

ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00 (ISO) W

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O 012053Z APR 74

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 972

C O N F I D E N T I A L MEXICO 2772

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINR, ASEC, MX

SUBJECT: PATTERSON KIDNAPPING; PRESS GUIDANCE

REF: STATE 064709

MEXICO 2771

1. EMBASSY TASK FORCE IN STRATEGY SESSION REPORTED MEXICO'S REFTTEL DISCUSSED CONCERN OVER VARIOUS ASPECTS OF TREATMENT OF PATTERSON KIDNAPPING BY PRESS. FIRST, PRESS NATURALLY WANTS MORE FACTS ON KIDNAPPING AND DOES NOT UNDERSTAND OR ACCEPT THAT FACTS ARE FEW AND FAR BETWEEN IN THIS CASE. PRESS EVIDENTLY BELIEVE USG IS, FOR UNCLEAR REASONS, WITHHOLDING INFORMATION WHICH SHOULD BE MADE PUBLIC. SECOND, GOM OFFICIALS UP TO AND INCLUDING SOME IN THE PRESIDENCY ARE, THROUGH BACKGROUND BRIEFINGS, INTERVIEWS, OR PUBLIC STATEMENTS, CONTINUING TO RAISE QUESTIONS AS TO BONA FIDES OF KIDNAPPING, AS WELL AS REPEATING RUMORS (SUCH AS ALLEGED SIGHTING OF PATTERSON TRANSFERRING FROM CONSULATE VEHICLE TO CAMPER AT GASOLINE STATION) WHICH GOM INVESTIGATIVE TEAM IN HERMOSILLO HAVE CHECKED OUT AND FOUND TO BE WITHOUT SUBSTANCE.) EMBASSY CONSIDERS INDICATIONS OF DOUBT BY GOM AS TO WHETHER A TRUE KIDNAPPING HAS OCCURRED HIGHLY RISKY, OFFENSIVE TO PATTERSON FAMILY, AND UNSUPPORTED BY EVIDENCE AVAILABLE UP TO NOW. (DEPARTMENT'S MESSAGE UNDER REFERENCE MOST HELPFUL IN THIS RESPECT.) THIRD, EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT SOME FACTS IN CASE --, E.G. THAT NOTE CONTAINED THREAT OF FURTHER VIOLENCE -- ARE NOW SO
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WIDELY KNOWN THAT THESE FACTS MIGHT BE ACKNOWLEDGED WITHOUT

INCREASING JEOPARDY OF THREATENED PARTIES. EMBASSY ACCORDINGLY PROPOSES THAT DEPARTMENT CONSIDER STATEMENT AT NEXT NOON BRIEFING ALONG LINES OF FOLLOWING PARAGRAPH. EMBASSY IN MEANTIME CHECKING VIEWS OF MRS. ANDRA PATTERSON ON THIS PROPOSAL. IF DEPARTMENT CONCURS IN RELEASING SUCH STATEMENT (AND EMBASSY BELIEVES IT SHOULD BE RELEASED IN WASHINGTON) EMBASSY FURTHER RECOMMENDS THAT GOM BE GIVEN COPY OF STATEMENT BUT WITHOUT INVITATION TO SUGGEST SIGNIFICANT SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN TEXT.

2. PROPOSED DRAFT TEXT AS FOLLOWS:

"THE KIDNAPPING OF FOREIGN SERVICE OFFICER JOHN PATTERSON ASSIGNED TO OUR CONSULATE GENERAL IN HERMOSILLO, MEXICO HAS BEEN MARKED SINCE ITS OCCURRENCE ON MARCH 22 BY AN UNUSUAL LACK OF INFORMATION. SINCE MR. PATTERSON'S DISAPPEARANCE AND THE DISCOVERY IN THE CONSULATE GENERAL OFFICES OF A RANSOM NOTE THE SAME DAY, THERE HAS BEEN NO FURTHER COMMUNICATION FROM MR. PATTERSON OR THE PERSON OR PERSONS HOLDING HIM. BECAUSE OF THREATS OF FURTHER VIOLENCE CONTAINED IN THE RANSOM NOTE, THE FACT OF HIS DISAPPEARANCE WAS NOT MADE PUBLIC AT THE TIME IT WAS DISCOVERED. US OFFICIALS IN MEXICO HAVE NOT BEEN AUTHORIZED TO RELEASE TO THE PRESS THE TEXT OF THE RANSOM NOTE. RECENT PRESS REPORTS, HOWEVER, REFLECT THE FACT THAT KNOWLEDGE OF THE KIDNAPPING AND SOME OF ITS DETAILS HAS NECESSARILY BECOME MORE WIDELY SPREAD AS INVESTIGATIVE EFFORTS GO FORWARD. THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION AMPLIFIES TO THE EXTENT CONSIDERED PRUDENT THE STATEMENT MADE BY CG YELTON, IN HERMOSILLO ON MARCH 28:

(A) THE RANSOM NOTE APPARENTLY DICTATED TO JOHN PATTERSON AND CONFIRMED BY HIS WIFE AND COLLEAGUES TO BE IN HIS HANDWRITING WAS DISCOVERED AT THE CONSULATE OFFICES AT APPROXIMATELY 2:00 PM ON MARCH 22. IT CONTAINS A DEMAND FOR MONEY AND INSTRUCTIONS FOR ITS DELIVERY. MRS. PATTERSON FOLLOWED THOSE INSTRUCTIONS PRECISELY, BUT NO CONTACT WAS MADE. THERE HAS BEEN NO CONFIDENTIAL

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FURTHER COMMUNICATION FROM THE PERSONS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE NOTE SINCE ITS DISCOVERY.

(B) ACCORDING TO THE ONLY EYEWITNESSES WHO WHO HAVE SPOKEN OUT, MR. PATTERSON WAS LAST SEEN IN A CONSULATE VEHICLE IN THE COMPANY OF AN UNIDENTIFIED MAN. MEXICAN AUTHORITIES ARE CONDUCTING THE INVESTIGATION IN MEXICO WITH

THE FULL COOPERATION OF UNITED STATES OFFICIALS
ASSIGNED TO MEXICO. US EMBASSY OFFICERS FROM
MEXICO CITY ARE NOW PRESENT IN HERMOSILLO TO
PROVIDE ANY ASSISTANCE TO THE INVESTIGATION AND
TO MRS. PATTERSON WHICH MAY BE REQUIRED.
WE WILL CONTINUE TO COOPERATE CLOSELY WITH MEXICAN
GOVERNMENT AUTHORITIES IN THE CASE."

3. IF STATEMENT SUCH AS ABOVE IS MADE BY DEPARTMENT SPOKES-
MAN, A REPLY MIGHT ALSO BE PREPARED TO QUERIES CONCERNING
THE WIDELY-DISSEMINATED RUMOR THAT PATTERSON WAS SEEN
TRANSFERRING FROM THE CONSULATE VEHICLE TO A CAMPER. THIS
RUMOR HAS BEEN CHECKED OUT BY INVESTIGATORS IN HERMOSILLO
AND HAS NOT BEEN SUBSTANTIATED.
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